

REMARKS

Claims 1-37 are currently pending. Claims 1, 2, 4-8, 17-20, 25, 26, and 33 have been amended in this response.

Applicant would like to thank the Examiner for his consideration during the telephone interviews of June 2 and June 12, 2006. During the telephone interview, the applicant's representative and the Examiner discussed the claimed invention, the cited references, and possible amendments to overcome the cited references.

The Examiner has rejected claims 4-6, 25, 26, and 31 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) as being anticipated by "Teach Yourself Microsoft Project 98 in 24 Hours" ("Microsoft Project 98"). Even though applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner's position, applicant has amended independent claims 4 and 25 to further clarify the claimed subject matter.

Applicant's technique is directed toward a computer implemented method in a project management system for receiving and displaying an estimated project task duration. In one example, the estimated project task duration is represented as a duration value string that includes a text string having a duration value portion (e.g., "2weeks") and an estimated flag (e.g., "?") that accompanies the duration value portion. A parser separates the duration value string into the duration value portion and the estimated flag and converts the duration value portion into a numerical value of time (e.g., 336 hours). A display shows the numerical value of time with an estimated duration character if the estimated flag is detected. The estimated duration character indicates that the numerical value of time is estimated and needs to be adjusted when a definite duration value is known (e.g., after a project task has been completed).

Microsoft Project 98 discloses a method of tracking the progress of a project by comparing a base line duration of a task to an actual duration for the same task. In particular, Microsoft Project 98 teaches displaying in the actual date field "NA" until a user indicates that the work has started or finished. When a user enters a value in the actual

work field, the program copies the entered value into the current schedule field, replacing any estimated value with the actual value. As the user tracks actual performance, the current schedule changes from original speculative values to the known actual values.

Microsoft Project 98 cannot form the basis of a Section 102(a) rejection of claims 4-6, 25, 26, and 31 because Microsoft Project 98 does not teach or suggest to "display the estimated duration character in a display field, wherein ... the estimated duration character indicates that the project task duration value is estimated and needs to be adjusted when a definite duration value is known" of claims 4-6, 25, 26, and 31. Instead, Microsoft Project 98 discloses that if an actual date is not known for a task, the text "NA" can be automatically inserted to indicate that user input is required when the task is started or completed. Assuming, *arguendo*, that "NA" corresponds to the estimated duration character of the pending claims, Microsoft Project 98 does not teach or suggest that "NA" can accompany any numerical value of time. Instead, such an arrangement seems contradictory because, according to Microsoft Project 98, "NA" indicates that a duration value is "not available." Moreover, the claims recite a novel combination of elements that is neither taught nor suggested by the side reference.

The Examiner has also rejected claims 17-20, 23, and 33-35 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) as being anticipated by Palisade's @ Risk ("@ Risk"). As applicant indicated in the Office Response filed February 24, 2006, and the accompanying § 1.132 declaration, applicant had reduced the claimed invention to practice before November 1, 1999. Therefore, the Palisade's @ Risk reference is not a prior art to the pending claims.

Even assuming, *arguendo*, that the teachings of @ Risk had been disclosed before November 1, 1999, @ Risk cannot form the basis of a Section 102(a) rejection of claims 17-20, 23, and 33-35 because @ Risk fails to teach or suggest some of the features of these claims. For example, @ Risk does not teach or suggest "displaying a second indication that the duration is estimated and the duration of the project task needs to be adjusted when a definite duration value is known," of these claims. Instead, @ Risk

discloses a risk calculation algorithm that can estimate project parameters (e.g., cost, finish time, etc.) based on known uncertainties. @ Risk is not concerned about allowing a user to enter a user-selected estimated duration for a task and displaying the entered duration with an indication that the duration is estimated and needs to be adjusted when definite duration is known.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-3 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Clark ("Clark"). Even though applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner's position, applicant has amended independent claims 1, 4, 17, 24, and 33 to further clarify the claimed subject matter.

Clark discloses a networked computer system that allows project participants to individually provide estimates of project parameters (e.g., finish dates). Each participant can be assigned a task and a task horizon. The participant can provide estimates of, for example, when the assigned task can be completed, within this task horizon. The individual estimates can then be collected to form a more realistic project schedule.

Without commenting on or conceding the merits of the Official Notice taken by the Examiner, Clark cannot form the basis for a Section 103(a) rejection because Clark fails to teach or suggest some features of claims 1-3 even when combined with the Official Notice. For example, Clark does not teach or suggest "a user interface for receiving a project task duration value string having a duration value portion and an estimated flag," "a parser for separating the duration value string into the duration value portion and the estimated flag, wherein the duration value portion is converted into a numerical value of time, and ... the estimated flag indicates whether the estimated duration character should be displayed," or "a display for ... showing the estimated duration character in the field based on the estimated flag, and ... the estimated duration character indicates that the numerical value of time is estimated and needs to be adjusted when a definite duration value is known" of claims 1-3. Instead, Clark simply discloses that each participant makes "an estimation as to how long each ... task should take to complete." (Clark at column 12, lines 55-60).

Clark neither teaches nor suggests that the participant's input can have the arrangements of claims 1-3.

The Examiner has also rejected claims 7-16, 27-30, and 32 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Microsoft Project 98 in view of @ Risk. As discussed above, @ Risk is not a prior art to the pending claims. Even assuming, *arguendo*, that @ Risk can be a reference, as discussed above, @ Risk does not fill the void left by Microsoft Project 98. As a result, the combination of Microsoft Project 98 and @ Risk cannot form the bases for a Section 103(a) rejection of these claims.

Based upon these amendments and remarks, applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this application and its early allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned at (206) 359-6038.

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Respectfully submitted,

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